

# “B” Rated Weeds

A weed of economic importance which is regionally abundant,  
but may have limited distribution in some counties

Slender flowered thistle  
*Carduus tenuiflorus*

Other common names: None noted

USDA symbol: Cate2  
ODA rating: B



**Introduction:** Slender-flowered thistle is native to southern Europe. Heavy infestations can be found in southwestern Oregon inhabiting hillside pastures where it competes with desirable forage causing economic losses to the sheep industry. It is very similar in appearance and habits to Italian thistle. Biocontrol insects have fortunately reduced the density and impacts of this species.

**Distribution:** The first documented site in Oregon was in 1939 in Coos County. It is common in SW Oregon counties, and is scattered around the Willamette Valley.

**Description:** Annual or sometimes biennial; blooms May to June.

Grows 1 to 4 feet tall. Stems have spiny wings. Leaves deeply cut into 2 to 5 pairs of lobes and undersurface slightly woolly. Flowers purplish to pinkish, borne in cylindrical heads either solitary or in clusters of 2 to 5. Bracts hairy; fruits from outer part of flower head gray, inner portion are yellowish to tan. Nearly identical to Italian thistle, but has larger flower clusters.

**Impacts:** It infests roadsides and waste areas, and has become a major problem on hill pasture land in Douglas county, Oregon. Once established, it spreads rapidly and forms dense stands that displace more desirable vegetation and exclude livestock.

**Biological controls:** Two approved biocontrol agents, a seed head weevil and a stem-boring fly, have been successfully established in Oregon. [Cheilosia corydon](#) (stem miner), *Rhinocyllus conicus* (seed weevil). Both species have made a significant impact on the thistles.

